THE VILLA

This marked the beginning of the period of buying up the land adjoining the monastery and the underlying terrain, the so-called « valle gaudente » (« joyous valley ») where the garden was to be. The plan was to enlarge and restructure the old monastery, but it was necessary to heed, in the building plan, the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and, in the garden layout, the church of St. Peter's. In fact, on the far side of the courtyard of the building was—and still is—one of Santa Maria Maggiore's side walls and the garden tapers off below by the church of St. Peter's. Evidently not even Cardinal Ippolito was able to expropriate and demolish two important church buildings. Consequently, since building over a pre-existing structure could not be avoided — and indeed some of the old walls had to be utilized — the planimetric pattern of the building turned out to be irregular.

Work was begun right after the cardinal's stay at Tivoli, although it was interrupted again and again, partially due to the fact that Ippolito, by order of Henry II (1551), left almost immediately for Siena. Only during the summer of 1555 did he return to Tivoli, and then just for a brief visit since in December of that year the new pope Paul IV had convicted him of simony and divested him of the office of Governor of Tivoli, sending him off to Lombardy. In 1560, just after the death of Paul IV and the election of Pius IV, Cardinal Ippolito was once more appointed governor of the Tiburtine territories for life, and so he went off to spend the summer at Tivoli. From then on his stays became frequent and regular. This was undoubtedly the period that work was once more undertaken at full speed and perhaps the considerable changes wrought on the original plans to reconstruct the building date back to this time. Nonetheless, the project was held up once more during the reign of Pope Pius V (1568) when, as a result of the new relationships that had grown up between monarchs and the Church, Cardinal Ippolito was destituted of all his lucrative French offices.

The differences between the original plans and what was actually partially put up later may be seen by comparing a painting by Muziano dated c. 1565 with an engraving by Dupérac of 1573. The two building stages are visible even in the façade which, albeit unfinished, reveals the use of different kinds of building materials, i.e. stucco and travertine. Even a superficial examination shows that a number of structures are missing from the two upper floors, the protruding wings are not completely finished (in fact, they were to end in a tower-shaped top floor), and the corners and footing lack the planned ashlar-work covering. Yet the appearance of the façade is simple and luminous, and the slight protrusion of the wings provides greater emphasis to the double loggia of the central section joining the two halves of the main staircase. This double loggia serves the two most important floors of the building, i.e. the Cardinal's suite and the floor used for official ceremonies. The top floor (with the Cardinal's rooms) provides a panoramic view, while the floor below opens out on a perspective view of the underlying garden.

The main section of the building takes up two floors, i.e. courtyard level where the Cardinal's rooms were located, and the floor beneath with the reception halls and the great hall with the fountain. In the rear was a long cryptoporticus, partially covered with mosaic and stucco designs which are reminiscent of Hadrian's Villa. The decoration of the rooms on these floors was carried out by a team of painters, stucco workers, and *fontanieri* (fountain workers) who worked closely together following a carefully set out iconographic scheme to complete the symbolism of the garden. The Cardinal's suite on the portico level was originally supposed to be adorned with sixteen tapestries portraying the story of the mythological Hippolytus [1], but Pirro Ligorio, who had received the commission for the project, only came up with a description and sketches [2]. Painted along the friezes in the central hall were several female figures personifying Wisdom, Humanity, Charity, and Patience. Two other rooms were decorated with other Virtues and eight busts of Greek philosophers

[1] Hippolytus, son of the Athenese hero Theseus and the queen of the Amazons Hippolyte, greatly loved hunting and chastity and thus honored Diana. Venus, jealous of this, caused his stepmother Phedra, third wife of Theseus, to fall passionately in love with him. But Hippolytus rejected her and Phedra filled her husband's ears with tales about him so that Theseus prayed Neptune to punish his son for him. Thus, one day while Hippolytus was driving his chariot along the beach, a monster emerged from the water frightening the horses who crashed the chariot and Hippolytus, dragged over the rocks, met a horrible death. Then Esculapius upon the intercession of Diana brought him back to life. Diana, in order to hide him from Jupiter, who was angered at seeing his power usurped, brought him to Aricia in Latium, where he lived under the name of Virbius (Ovid, Metamorphoses, XV, v. 492).

[2] The description of these tapestries, written in Ligorio's own handwriting, has come down to us and is preserved in the Morgan Library in New York. The manuscript is made up of 19 folios in which Ligorio divides the story of Hippolytus-Virbius into sixteen parts, each of which is illustrated by a drawing. Each of these drawings was to have been made into a tapestry.